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SUBJECT: THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S FEBRUARY 7 MEETING WITH
GERMAN MFA STATE SECRETARY SILBERBERG IN MUNICH

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JEFF RATHKE. REASONS: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: During a February 7 meeting on the margins on the Munich Security Conference, Deputy Secretary Steinberg and German MFA State Secretary Silberberg discussed a wide range of issues, including Afghanistan, Russia, missile defense, Africa, and Iraq. Also participating in the meeting were Charge Koenig and German Ambassador to the United States Klaus Scharioth. Silberberg supported the formation of a Contact Group on Afghanistan and confirmed that Germany was thinking about appointing somebody with cross-ministerial responsibilities as a counterpart to Special Representative Holbrooke. Silberberg welcomed U.S. intentions to seek a new start to relations with Russia, and seemed relieved to hear from the Deputy Secretary that on NATO enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia, the U.S. "can stand where we got in December" at the NATO foreign ministers meeting. Silberberg reported that FM Steinmeier would travel to Iraq shortly with a business delegation, and that Germany was considering sending legal experts to assist in building up Iraq's judicial system. END SUMMARY.

BILATERAL COOPERATION

12. (C) The Deputy Secretary and Silberberg began their meeting by discussing mechanisms to facilitate greater bilateral cooperation. Silberberg regretted that there was no institutionalized mechanism for regular meetings at their level, noting that, as a result, issues that cannot be decided at the Undersecretary level must be pushed up directly to the Secretary)FM level. The Deputy Secretary advised that the new EUR A/S would effectively serve as the "P"-level contact for Germany and the rest of Europe, although he would welcome meeting Silberberg the next time he came to Washington.

CONTACT GROUP FOR AFGHANISTAN

13. (C) Silberberg said Germany liked the idea of a Contact Group on Afghanistan and asked how this should be done. The Deputy Secretary said this could be addressed once SR Holbrooke returned from his forthcoming to the region, but thought that there should be a "relatively high-level launch" for the new group. Silberberg noted that Germany was thinking about appointing somebody with cross-ministerial responsibilities like SR Holbrooke. Silberberg noted that this person would not only help improve Germany's internal coordination on Afghanistan, but also be a suitable counterpart to SR Holbrooke. He conceded, however, that this could prove difficult with a coalition government where the ministries involved were led by different parties. The Deputy Secretary emphasized that if the Contact Group was going to truly strengthen international coordination, then each country needed to have a representative who could speak

for his or her whole government and not just a particular ministry.

AFGHAN ELECTIONS

14. (C) Silberberg noted the dilemma over the timing of the Afghan presidential election. While May was too early to adequately prepare, delaying until August could lead to constitutional complications. While sympathetic to the constitutional issues, Silberberg said he considered May to be out of the question and that the international community had to be "very clear" in making this point to the Afghans. The Deputy Secretary said that the U.S. agreed that the election needed to be deferred until August, and that the international community should present a common front on this issue. The Afghans would have to work out the legal/constitutional implications themselves: "We can't do this for them."

ANA TRUST FUND

15. (C) Silberberg said that Germany was having "some problems" in meeting the U.S. request for Germany to provide an additional \$100 million per year from 2010 to 2014 in support of expansion of the Afghan National Army (ANA). Neither the Foreign Office nor the Ministry of Defense had the extra money in its budget to spare. The government was loathe to re-open the current budget for this purpose, which would invite all comers to seek funding increases, as had happened on the fiscal stimulus package. He said the government would keep working on this issue, but that it would take time and that nothing should be taken for granted. The Deputy Secretary pointed out that "either we help the

Afghans do it or we do ourselves with our own troops." Noting that the United States had its own money problems, he pointed out that on a per capita basis, it was much cheaper to recruit, train and deploy Afghan soldiers than it was to send and sustain foreign troops in Afghanistan. He cautioned against being penny wise and pound foolish on this issue.

RUSSIA

16. (C) Silberberg welcomed the Vice President's remarks seeking a new beginning in relations with Russia and noted that the Russians are particularly "emotional" regarding NATO enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia, even more than on missile defense (MD) or the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty. Clearly probing for the new Administration's view on these issues, Silberberg seemed relieved to hear from the Deputy Secretary that on NATO enlargement to Ukraine and Georgia, the U.S. "can stand where we got" at the December NATO foreign ministers meeting. "We are not under pressure to do anything on this right away." By contrast, the Deputy Secretary noted that "we need to move quickly" on negotiating a successor agreement to START with the Russians.

17. (C) On MD, the Deputy Secretary said that while the President remained to be convinced that the system was technologically feasible, the U.S. was not yet prepared to "take it off the table" given the need to address the emerging ballistic missile threat from Iran. "We're not trying to rush a decision on this." However, he acknowledged that the Czechs may press for an accelerated timetable on an MD decision. Silberberg thought that the time pressure the Czechs were feeling was largely self-inflicted since the government was trying to link ratification of the EU Lisbon Treaty with approval of the MD agreements. He suggested rejecting that linkage. The Deputy Secretary said he hoped to get more clarity on the Czech position when FM Schwarzenberg visited Washington February 10.

AFRICA

18. (C) Silberberg described Africa as a "real headache," noting that he does not see many positive results from Germany's increasing development assistance there. He expressed concerns about Libyan leader Qaddafi as head of the

Africa Union (AU) and asked for the Deputy Secretary's thoughts on Somalia. He was skeptical of a UN peacekeeping force involving Europeans -- this had to be done by Africans.

The Deputy Secretary indicated that he saw the transitional government as a step forward, but thought it would be counterproductive to have too heavy an American footprint there. He considered U.S. participation in any peacekeeping operation "unimaginable," although he noted that the U.S. has strong interests there, given the large Somali presence in U.S. and linked terrorism threat.

IRAQ

¶9. (C) Silberberg confirmed that FM Steinmeier would be going to Iraq "very soon" and would be accompanied by a economic delegation. He noted that many German companies that left after the war are ready to re-establish a presence there. Silberberg also revealed that Germany was considering sending German legal experts to help the Iraqis with judicial and other institutional state-building. The Deputy Secretary noted that the U.S. has been focusing on military disengagement, but that this needs to be accompanied by civilian assistance. In that regard, the German engagement would be very welcome and useful.

¶10. (U) The Deputy Secretary reviewed and cleared this message.
Koenig